

REMARKS

Claims 15-19 remain in this application. Claims 1-14 have been cancelled and new claims 15-19 have been added. Claim 15 includes the elements from former dependent claim 12 along with elements from former claim 1. One of the elements from claim 1 now is in claim 16. Dependent claims 17-19 correspond to former claims 2, 13 and 14.

The Examiner's reasons for rejecting claims 12-14 are not clear, because an explanation corresponding to each claim is not given in the Office Action. For instance, claim 12 is rejected based on the reasons described in paragraph 5 on page 4 of the Office Action, such as "Claims 4, 6 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Knibiehler et al. in view of Vines et al. and Bazamik." However, the combination of elements claimed in claim 12 is not set out in the details of the reason of the rejection. The reasons for rejection of claim 4 are clear from the comments, but not of claim 12. Furthermore, none of the references alone or in combination disclose the element added by claim 12 (now included in claim 15). Thus, because they believe claim 12 clearly distinguished over the art, Applicants have written new independent claim 15 and dependent claims 16-19.

The advantages achieved by the invention claimed in claims 15-19 are disclosed at page 27, line 10 to page 28, line 6 of the specification.

With a remote maintenance system, it is important to specify the apparatus-to-be-maintained. Particularly, in a case when maintenance of an apparatus-to-be-maintained, which is installed in a setting where maintenance centers are arranged in many different facilities, is performed, there is a possibility of performing maintenance on the wrong apparatus-to-be-maintained. In this case, if the apparatus-to-be-maintained is positively specified by comparing the maintenance history recorded in the maintenance history storage unit in the maintenance center during the latest connection of the communication channel with the maintenance history recorded in the maintenance history storage unit in the maintenance history recorded in the maintenance history storage unit in the maintenance monitor mechanism as claimed in 15, any deterioration of the apparatus quality by wrongly performed maintenance can be prevented.

Furthermore, significant advantages include: the ability to confirm that the maintenance function is utilized correctly via a network; to make it possible to take any collaborative counter measure if any wrong utilization of the maintenance function is found; and to make it possible to prevent wrong utilization of the maintenance function.

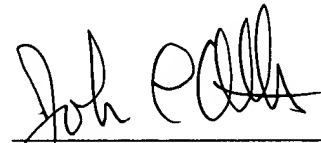
Because the references do not disclose the claimed combination and the advantages of the present invention mentioned above, Applicants believe that the rejection of claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) was improper. For the same reason, claims 15-19, which include the same limitations, along with additional limitations, define over this art.

In view of the above, all remaining claims are in condition for allowance, prompt notice of which is respectfully solicited.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at (202) 220-4200 to discuss any information concerning this application.

The Office is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or § 1.17 or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,



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